

Tip #5

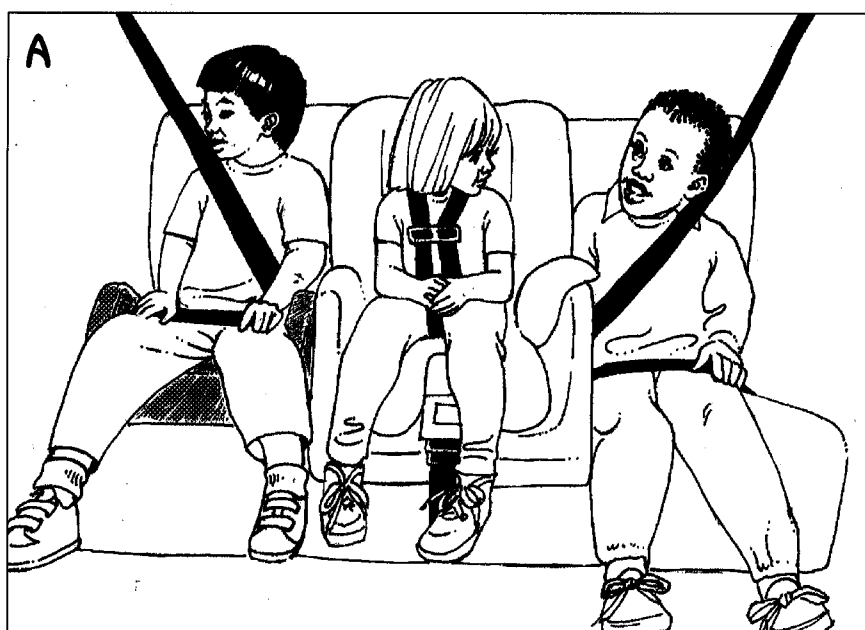
how should preschool and school children ride safely?

Your child should stay in a car safety seat with a full harness until the seat is outgrown, usually at about 40 pounds. When a child's shoulders are above the top set of strap slots, it is time for a booster seat.

Booster seats protect the child's upper body with either the shoulder belt or with a shield. The booster also raises the child so the vehicle lap/shoulder belt fits well.

Why use a booster seat instead of a safety belt?

- Most 40-pound children are not big enough to fit lap and shoulder belts properly.
- A belt that rides up on the tummy could cause serious injury.
- The adult lap and shoulder belt normally does not fit a child until they are about 4'9" tall and weigh approx. 80 lbs.
- Many young children do not sit still enough or straight enough to keep lap belts low across their thighs.



- Boosters are comfortable for children because they allow their legs to bend normally. This also reduces slouching, one cause of poor lap belt fit.

Three kinds of booster seats (A):

1. Boosters without shields, for use only with the vehicle lap/shoulder belt. (left, right) Because raising the child improves belt fit, these are called "belt-positioning boosters." Some have a high back that gives head support for taller children. (right) Some boosters of this type are built into vehicle seats.
2. Boosters with removable shields. Use without the shield to make lap and shoulder belts fit right. Shield boosters are not currently approved for children weighing over 40 pounds. A child who has outgrown their convertible seat, yet weighs less than 40 pounds can be moved into a high-back booster with a harness. Once the child reaches 40 pounds, the harness is removed and the seat is used with the adult lap and shoulder belt as a belt-positioning booster.
3. High-backed boosters, used as belt-positioning boosters (right). Most have a clip or strap to hold the shoulder belt in place.

Some high-backed boosters have removable harnesses (B, on back). This type can be used with the harness for a child under 40 lbs.

Children who reach 40 pounds before age 3 may not be mature enough to stay seated properly in a belt-positioning booster. A vest that uses the belt system and a tether strap would be an option in this situation.